

**County of Los Angeles
Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Economic Resiliency Taskforce
Labor Sector Recommendation Report**

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Dr. King once famously said, “All labor has dignity,” and that statement rings as truly today as it did in 1968. The coronavirus pandemic has reminded us all of the important role that essential workers play in servicing the public, maintaining public health, and keeping places of business functioning properly.

As our economy begins to reopen, it’s imperative that we center any reopening on adequate health and safety practices within the workplace. Workplaces serve as gathering points for members of the public, whether that be in an office building, or at essential businesses. Unsanitary and inadequate health and safety protections in the workplace threaten the health of workers and members of the general public, as well as jeopardizing business operations and our overall economy. The workplace is ground zero for society in the battle against COVID-19, and protecting workers is critical if we want to establish an expedited recovery timeline, and mitigate any breakouts as they emerge (which will continue until there is a vaccine in place).

Further, the workplace will serve as ground zero for our economic recovery plan. In addition to putting people back to work as quickly as possible, it’s important to make sure that our jobs are of a high-road nature, meaning that they provide living wages for workers, provide adequate sick leave, and allow workers to remain safe on the job. After all, what good is an economic recovery plan if it’s based on poverty-wage jobs that require workers to rely on public assistance? That has the opposite effect of stimulating our economy, and it’s a backwards approach to any honest economic recovery effort.

WHO WE ARE

The Labor Workgroup is comprised of dozens labor affiliates, representing a cross-section of industries including the building and construction and trades, leisure and hospitality, grocery, health care, public sector workers, fire, janitorial, education, logistics, warehousing, manufacturing, and sanitation. Together, we have developed the following list of recommendations for the County’s consideration, which have been divided into two buckets: health and safety, and economic recovery. It is our belief that the recommendations put forth by this committee will reopen the economy in a way that protects workers, mitigates any future breakouts of COVID-19, and stimulates our economic recovery.

HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

As a nation, we have reached a COVID-19 death rate of over 100,000 people, and the economic fallout has been on levels not seen since the Great Depression. The pandemic has also exposed the deep structural divide that exists for working families, particularly women¹ and people of

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/18/us/coronavirus-women-essential-workers.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

color², who are disproportionately more likely to be working at a low-wage “essential” job, more likely to be without health benefits, and are more likely to be exposed to the coronavirus.

Worker safety is fundamental to any economic recovery, and the best way to ensure worker safety is to give workers a real voice on the job that allows them to shape, and uphold, health and safety protocols without fear of retaliation. As we have witnessed, when workers are not protected in the workplace, particularly in essential businesses, the worksite can quickly transform into a petri dish where the virus can spread among the workers, the public, and their family members³. This only prolongs the public health pandemic, and delays any economic recovery plan.

Our workplace health and safety recommendations are as follows:

1. **Establish worker-lead health and safety committees within the workplace.** Workers are critical in identifying on the ground solutions, as they’re the eyes and ears of day-to-day operations. Workers can best identify what’s working, what’s not working, and are best positioned to identify solutions. To that extent, the County should enact a policy requiring employers to permit worker-lead health and safety committees, which will be made up entirely of workers and will meet to develop a detailed plan of what is needed for protection in the various departments of the employer’s operation, track follow-through, and work with the employer to address any gaps in health and safety needs.
2. **Establishment of Certified Worker Safety Organizations.** The County should certify third-party worker safety organizations to assist with compliance. A certified worker safety organization should be a nonprofit organization dedicated to worker education and enforcement of worker rights, and should have a proven track record of educating and enforcing workplace protocols. Certified worker safety organizations would be able to assist workplace health and safety committees with technical assistance, education, and tracking and filing any instances of non-compliance.
3. **Expand and Maintain Existing Worker Safety Protocols.** LA County became a national leader when it included Appendix A⁴ in the emergency public health order. Appendix A should become a permanent set of standards within the workplace, and should expand to all workplaces. Appendix A requires enforcement of social distancing, employer provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), employer provided sanitation products, and a requirement for having sanitary public restrooms. Further, the existing construction guidelines that have been in place since Mid-March should also be extended (see attachment 1).
4. **County Assistance with Procurement of PPE.** PPE has been difficult to secure for many businesses, and when available, rates can vary widely. Further, there have been several

² <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/04/10/how-to-reduce-the-racial-gap-in-covid-19-deaths/>

³ <https://www.nbctosangeles.com/news/coronavirus/covid-19-outbreak-with-up-to-140-cases-reported-at-farmer-john-slaughterhouse-in-vernon/2367571/>

⁴

http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/HOO/HOO_Safer_at_Home_Order_for_Control_of_COVID_5.13.20_APPENDIX_A.pdf

low-road vendors who have exploited the current situation by taking orders and not delivering. In an effort to reduce costs, root out low-road vendors, and make PPE available to all employers, the County should work to either certify credible vendors and negotiate maximum rates that vendors can charge for PPE when businesses in LA County seek to purchase it, or procure the PPE and sell it to businesses for the same price at which it was purchased.

5. **On-site testing for all workers.** Before returning to work, all workers should be tested so as not to put their fellow coworkers at risk, nor the daily operations of their business. The County should expand its access to testing and make it available to employers to bring testing on site.
6. **Undocumented workers must be protected in any workplace safety policy.** Any exclusion of undocumented workers only threatens to prolong the current crisis, as any worker can transmit the virus. If any worker is left unprotected, all workers are left unprotected.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Health & Safety is key to upholding public health. However, as we've witnessed, this public health pandemic has resulted in an economic pandemic, and has the potential to spiral into an outright depression. Full recovery is not expected any time soon, and there are projections that forecast a full recovery by mid decade, if not longer.⁵ An economic recession hurts everyone, but even moreso women and people of color.⁶ Economic recovery should focus on rehiring, reskilling, reclassifying, and raising the floor in economically insecure jobs.

Further, as we grapple with the question about what California's future workforce will look like, it is clear that "essential jobs" will continue to be part of that picture. As such, we must focus our energies on how to transform our essential jobs into good, high-road jobs that support and sustain a family.

Our economic recovery recommendations are as follows:

1. **Attach minimal job standards to any public procurement processes.** The County must lead by example, and any procurement of public funding by a local business, or public stimulus spending directed at a specific industry, should include health and safety standards that meet the current moment, provide living wages, benefits, quality healthcare, PPE and testing for workers.
2. **Enforce misclassification/AB-5.** Misclassification is a dual threat to our economic and physical health. When workers are misclassified, they are not provided with sick days, PPE, nor healthcare benefits. Additionally, when companies misclassify workers, they

⁵ <https://www.inquirer.com/business/recovery-economy-zandi-moodys-virus-covid-19-jobs-prediction-20200423.html>

⁶ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2020/04/14/483125/economic-fallout-coronavirus-people-color/>

are not paying their fair share into state unemployment systems, and are therefore further straining our public agencies by dumping the costs on taxpayers.

3. **Right of recall and worker retention for all.** Any worker who was laid off as a result of the pandemic should have a right to return to their job. Additionally, should a company be sold during the pandemic, workers should have an opportunity to keep their job. This brings back experienced workers for businesses, saving costs for onboarding any new employees. Additionally, this provides workers with a framework for how temporarily laid-off workers will piece their lives back together once the economy reopens.
4. **Uplift Existing Job Pipelines and Career Paths.** The Building and Construction Trades have a well-established apprenticeship pipeline that leads journeymen into long-term, sustainable career paths. Their model should be uplifted as the leading example for how to effectively create pathways out of poverty. They are able to enact targeted local hiring, and have a remarkable success rate at graduating apprentices and landing them into sustainable jobs.
5. **Raise the Floor In Low-Wage Industries.** With over 4 million unemployment claims made to date in LA County,⁷ our public safety net is under more duress than at any time in recent memory. Given the shortage of public resources, we should ensure that all jobs in the County provide living wages, provide family benefit plans, and minimize dependence on public assistance programs. Our public safety net programs must be prioritized for those who are unemployed, they should not be used to subsidize low-road employment practices by employers to offset costs for workers. Further, there is no greater stimulus package than putting money in the pockets of workers, as they spend it on basic needs, and keep dollars circulating in the local economy.
6. **Expedite Shovel-Ready Projects.** We must keep the County working. There is a list of shovel-ready projects ready to go (see attachment 2), which will keep people employed, enact apprenticeship programs, and sustain high-road jobs that keep workers out of poverty. Maintaining existing construction projects must be a priority.

TIMELINE

Each of these recommendations is ready to go now, and it is our belief that these must be enacted in order to ensure and preserve a strong economic recovery.

COSTS

The recommendations stated above should be cost neutral for the County. Further, implementing these recommendations could generate additional revenues for the County.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. LA Building & Safety Announcement No. 5, March 31, 2020
2. LA County Projects Shovel Ready

⁷ <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/145878.pdf>



L.A. BUILDING & SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENT No. 5 March 31, 2020

LADBS Announcements are posted at <http://www.ladbs.org/our-organization/messaging/news>

TOPIC

COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR CONSTRUCTION SITES

The following guidelines are based on Interim CDC's Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), OSHA's Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19, and other publications. Please check LADBS.org for the latest updates.

Construction industry employers shall develop a comprehensive COVID-19 exposure control plan, which includes control measures such as social distancing; symptom checking; hygiene; decontamination procedures, and training. An exposure control plan and the following practices must be followed to prevent any onsite worker from contracting COVID-19, as many people with COVID-19 are asymptomatic and can potentially spread disease. Failure to comply with this guidance shall be deemed as creating unsafe conditions and may result in withheld inspections or shutting down the construction site until corrected.

LADBS staff will verify compliance with these guidelines during regular scheduled inspections for projects under construction as well as during investigations associated with complaints that may be submitted to LADBS (Call center - 311 or (213) 473-3231 – Calls will then be routed to LADBS' Call Center. OR, use the MyLA311 Website at <https://myla311.lacity.org/> or submit via the MyLA311 mobile app.)

1. Practice social distancing by maintaining a minimum 6-foot distance from others.
2. Preclude gatherings of any size, and anytime two or more people must meet, ensure minimum 6-foot separation.
3. Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields and face masks as appropriate for the activity being performed.
4. The owner/contractor shall designate a site specific COVID-19 Supervisor to enforce this guidance. A designated COVID-19 Supervisor shall be present on the construction site at all times during construction activities. The COVID-19 Supervisor can be an on-site worker who is designated to carry this role.
5. Identify "choke points" and "high-risk areas" where workers are forced to stand together, such as hallways, hoists and elevators, break areas, and buses, and control them so social distancing is maintained.
6. Minimize interactions when picking up or delivering equipment or materials, ensure minimum 6-foot separation.
7. Stagger the trades as necessary to reduce density and maintain minimum 6-foot separation social distancing.
8. Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, work tools and equipment. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
9. Post, in areas visible to all worker, required hygienic practices including not touching face with unwashed hands or with gloves; washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; use of hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, cleaning AND disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, machines, shared tools, elevator control buttons, and doorknobs; covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing as well as other hygienic recommendations by the CDC.
10. Place wash stations or hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
11. Require anyone on the project to stay home if they are sick, except to get medical care.
12. Have employees inform their supervisor if they have a sick family member at home with COVID-19.
13. Maintain a daily attendance log of all workers and visitors.

Project Name	Address	Units	TDC	LA County \$	HHH \$	Developer
Marcella Gardens	6714 S. Main Street, Los Angeles	60	\$32.4 mm	\$6.4mm	\$12mm	Coalition for Responsible Community Development
Palm Vista Apts	20116-20128 Sherman Way, Los Angeles	91	\$48.5 mm	\$8.44mm	No	Hollywood Community Housing Corporation
Talisa Apts	9502 Van Nuys, Los Angeles	49	\$33.3mm	\$4.1 mm	\$10.6 mm	Domus/LA Family Housing
Bell Creek Apts	6940 Owensmouth Avenue, Los Angeles	80	\$49.7mm	\$5 mm \$6.3mm HCD/LACDA	\$6.2 mm	Meta Housing
NoHo 5050	5050 Bakman Avenue, Los Angeles	40	\$21.5 mm	\$4.4mm HCD/LACDA	\$3.8 mm	Decro Corporation/Downtown Women's Center